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DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION:

A PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE

Clergy and Laity

OF THE

DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER.

H. E. Manning
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REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN, AND DEAR CHILDREN IN JESUS
CHRIST,—

S. James writes : “ Of His own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning,” or the first-fruits, “ of His creatures ;” * that is, the regenerate are His chief works, chosen out from mankind to know Him and to be elevated by the word of truth, and to become in turn the principle and cause of knowledge, elevation, perfection, to the moral, intellectual, and spiritual nature of mankind. It is undeniable, even by those who unhappily are out of the light of the faith, that the Christian world is the highest condition to which mankind has ever attained. Ascribe it to what they may, men are compelled to acknowledge that the moral and intellectual state of man in the last eighteen hundred years surpasses the highest maturity of any earlier time. They ascribe it to civilization ; we to Christianity. We affirm that Christianity in itself is civilization, and more than civilization ; that civilization without Christianity is dwarfed, stunted, and deformed ; that Christianity is the first-fruits and the cause of the highest civilization of man and of society. We affirm this truth to-day for a special purpose : in order to declare, with explicit reasons, why the Catholic Church has always inflexibly held that the education of its children is a sacred trust of the Divine Founder of Christianity, and that for a Christian people education without religion is impossible.

We are now about to enter into a public discussion—we fear that it must be said, into a public conflict—on the subject of national education. It is therefore our duty as pastors to declare betimes, and in words which are beyond all mistake, what are the laws which govern the Catholic Church in the matter of education,

* S. James i. 18.

and what are the obligations which it is impossible for us either to violate or to compromise. In order to do this in as full and reasoned a way as possible, it will be necessary to lay down certain principles on which this declaration is founded.

We are bound, both by the natural and the revealed law of God, to educate children in the knowledge and love of Him and of His commandments; and, as a Christian people, we know that the true knowledge and love of God and of His commandments is to be found only in Christianity. It is the knowledge of God in Christ which has developed the reason and the will of man. For the want of this knowledge and love, the heathen world fell into polytheism, pantheism, atheism; the intellect and conscience were darkened, the heart and will were corrupt. The first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans gives the mere outline of the unimaginable degradation of man without Christ and without God in the world. The Hebrew race was elevated above all nations; and stood alone among all races of mankind for the nobleness of its intellectual culture, for the justice and mercy of its political order, and, in contrast with the heathen, for the chastity of its domestic life. The cause and source of this elevation, nobleness, justice, mercy, and chastity, were the knowledge of God and of His laws. The Christian world is elevated above the Hebrew race in all the same qualities which elevated the Hebrew race above the heathen; and in many others, before unknown, derived from the Person, the example, the teaching, and the work of its Divine Founder. Christianity has bestowed upon the world three perfect gifts, from which its nobler and higher civilization is derived: the true knowledge and conception of God, a perfect human example, a perfect law of duty towards God and man. On these three bases all civilization, law, government, legislation, morality public, domestic, and personal, are founded. If we appreciate Christianity only as a moral power working upon mankind, apart from the operations of supernatural grace and the power of Christian worship, sacraments, and prayer, it is undeniable that it is the perfection of human nature; and that it has developed the reason, heart, and will of man to a rectitude, a fulness, and a ripeness of which the philosophy and civilization of the heathen world had hardly so much as a shadow, and to which the highest reach

of the Hebrew race could never attain. This is to understate the truth ; but we are reasoning with those who do not believe in the life of counsels. We shall only state it adequately by saying that Christianity is the perfection of man.

It is from this equally certain, that Christianity alone preserves the reason and will of man from lapsing into the state of perversion and of immorality which prevailed in the world before Christianity came into it. Heathenism was a lapse and a corruption. The Hebrew race likewise lapsed into immoralities so great, that Moses for the hardness of their hearts gave them a law which derogated from the natural law of marriage, and is immensely below the law of Christianity. But the moral law of Christianity stands steadfast, and in this especial law of the domestic life on which all is founded, home and its sanctities, the commonwealth, its authority, order, and perfection, it remains, in the Catholic Church at least, immovable unto this day. We have been lately told, in a book which for a season has its notoriety, that the moral standard of Plato and Socrates, Cato and Cicero, bears comparison with the Catholic morality. The writer of such things must be either an untrusty reporter or a shallow student. A very slight classical reading would have made such an error impossible. It is not so that those who have really studied the civilization of the heathen world describe the private and public morals of Rome and Athens. Their highest examples,—philosophers, statesmen and censors included,—with very few exceptions, are stained with hideous blots. If there be a truth in human history it is this, that the moral regeneration of mankind, and the perpetuity of that moral regeneration in the world, is the work of Christianity; and that the principle in which it originates is also the principle of its preservation. The reason of this is self-evident: Christianity alone can form the inward life of man; philosophy could not either shape or sustain it; legislation could not so much as touch it. The pure theism of the Old Law alone could not only touch but shape and sustain the intellect, the heart, and the will; and yet this was only an imperfect and partial knowledge of God, the prelude of the fuller manifestation of the Divine Nature in the Christian law.

In addressing you, dear children in Jesus Christ, it is im-

possible to limit ourselves to the cold language of moralists; but in addressing those with whom we have now to contend the language of faith is as superstition and foolishness. You will know that when we speak of Christianity as the regeneration and perfection of mankind, we mean "the grace and truth which comes by Jesus Christ." The interior and supernatural grace of Baptism, dwelling and working in the soul; the light of faith, illuminating the intellect with a discernment of truth and falsehood, informing the conscience with perception and a sense of right and wrong, replenishing and sanctifying the heart with the love of God above all things, and with a rational love of self, as the measure and rule of our love to our neighbour; all this, and the grace of the Holy Sacraments, especially of Penance and of the Altar, together with the practice of a life of Christian piety and prayer, is included in our first conception of the power by which Christianity has elevated our nature, regenerated mankind, and created the Christian world. But we are now reasoning, not with you who believe and love these things, and would lay down your lives for them, but with those who, either from unbelief will not hear of them, or, from worldly calculations, will only regard Christianity so far as it is in contact with politics, or with the welfare of society. To them then we say, philosophy, legislation, literature, intellectual cultivation, from the science of universities to the reading and writing of the poor schools, will not form the inward life of man, and therefore cannot educate man. It will leave the heart, the conscience, and the will morally where it found them. The reason or the intelligence may be sharpened, and enlarged; but the moral nature, with its powers, passions and motives, will neither be elevated nor subdued.

In one word then, Christianity is the sole educator of mankind; and that, because the Christian Church alone has received the commission to educate, and the means and powers whereby to educate. The words, "Go ye therefore and teach," or make disciples of, "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," laid upon the Christian Church the obligation to educate; and conveyed to it both the truth and the law, that is, both the intellectual and moral power

whereby to fulfil that obligation. By the law of nature parents are bound to educate their children; by the law of Christianity the Church has the obligation to see that parents fulfil the duty of education. The duties and obligations of parents and of the Church are in perfect harmony; being derived from one source, and supplementing each other in their exercise. The first formation and training of a Christian child is the duty and work of the father and the mother; its higher and later formation is by the pastoral office of the Church. Both in the lower and the higher periods of a child's education, Christianity, that is the Christian truth and law, is the power by which the reason, the conscience, the heart, the will, and therefore the character and the life of the young, are shaped and moulded. Christianity alone can do this, for it alone possesses the key which fits the wards of the heart in man.

From this, again, it follows, as a necessary and self-evident consequence, that education without Christianity is impossible; or, to use a modern phrase, that the secular and the religious elements of education are inseparable; or, more simply, that education is essentially religious; or, that where religion is excluded there is no education. Do not be deceived by the confident and contemptuous talk of these days. Hold fast by the old traditions and axioms of your fathers. When we say that education without Christianity is impossible, we do not say that instruction without Christianity is impossible: we say only that instruction is not education, and that those who are only taught in secular instruction are not educated; and that a system of "national education" not based on Christianity is an imposture. It is not education. It cannot educate the people. Call it national instruction, if they will; but in the name of Christianity, if not also of truth, let it not be called education. It is necessary to keep this steadily and broadly before the eyes and the conscience of the country, because we are threatened by schemes of so-called national education, from which religion is excluded. To be just to many who are hesitating and hovering about these modern theories, we may say that they do not do so either from unbelief, or from irreligion, or from indifference about Christianity, or from a formed judgment that secular instruction alone is better than Christian education, or from preference for instruction without religion; but partly

from a certain want of courage in standing firm against the pretentious tone of a few theorists, and partly, and it may be said chiefly, from a weary and perplexed feeling that there remains no way out of the difficulties of our endless religious contradictions, but by excluding religion altogether from our schools. The truth is that a handful of *doctrinaires* and of social theorists, who have either lost their Christian faith, or have never had faith, are urging us to a national instruction without religion ; but the people of these kingdoms are a Christian people, and the handful of those who would exclude religion is not appreciable upon the millions who are as one man in desiring that their children shall be educated in the Christian religion. No system could be more contrary to the general feeling and desire, that is to the moral sense, of the people of these kingdoms, than a system of national instruction without religion. It is not to be believed that any one, except the handful of theorists already spoken of, would desire such a system. They could only be induced to hear of it, first, because the multitude of our children running wild in the streets is so great, and, secondly, because our religious contentions make it difficult to know what religion can be taught to them.

Now, there are four supposable systems of national education. The first, in which the whole people, being of one mind in religion, are religiously and christianly brought up in schools which are alike schools of the Church and of the State. But this golden age is over.

The second, which is next best, is that in which all denominations of religion and the Catholic Church are at liberty to found and to direct their own schools, by voluntary effort together with State support ; and in those schools to teach freely and fully their own doctrines and belief. Such is our present system, under which in the last thirty years, that is, since 1839, a vast multitude of schools has been formed, so as to provide for two-thirds of the children in England and Wales. This system is capable of any further extension and improvement, if the Government aid, proportionate to the vast vital work of education, were wisely distributed.

The third system, and the worst but one, is the Irish National System, in which the schools of a people five-sixths Catholic are

deprived, in submission to the prejudices of the remaining sixth part, of every token and symbol of the Catholic religion: and Catholic children are in many places taught by Protestant teachers, and out of books which, to say the least, are not Catholic; and no Catholic book is permitted. To call this a national education is irony, and an irony that wounds a Catholic nation.

The last and worst system of all, is that which is called the Secular School System, or, as in the United States, the Common School System, from which religion is altogether excluded.

Of this last system, in existence now for many years in America, the results are daily becoming manifest. We have it on the testimony of Americans, of Protestants, of clergymen, of physicians, of judges, and of statesmen, that both crime and immorality have increased, notwithstanding the spread of instruction. Such instruction, if it do not sharpen and develope the passions and facilities of immorality and crime, at least does not repress them. The only power which can form, purify, and govern the moral nature, is jealously excluded; and this privation leaves the heart and will in the rankness of nature. To us, then, there is no wonder that the Secular School System has utterly failed.

We have already said that education without religion is impossible; we may add that instruction without religion is instruction without morality. A people to whom morality is not taught cannot be moral, and morals cannot be taught without religion. For what is morality but the law of duty, which arises from our personal relations towards God and our neighbour? And how is it possible to teach this law of duty without the knowledge of the persons towards whom those relations exist? But to know this, unless we are going to reduce a Christian people to the level of deists, Christianity must be taught in our schools. Christian morality cannot be taught without the knowledge of Christ; and that again by necessity involves the knowledge of His person, His history, His teaching, and His commandments: it involves, in other words, Christianity; or, to speak out, it involves dogma, for a religion without dogma is not Christianity. In whatsoever school, then, religion is not taught, morality is not taught; and where morality is not taught, the heart, and conscience, and will of the young are not formed for the duties and for the conflicts of

life. And what can be more false, what more fatal than to call this education? It is not even instruction, for the larger and more necessary parts of knowledge are excluded.

But the ground on which this system is defended is that religion is to be left to the parents and to the pastors of the children; and that the State claims only to instruct children in secular matters. Now, on this much is to be said—

First, we accept it as an acknowledgment that the State has neither the commission nor the power to educate. So far, well. But how, then, has the State the right to compel parents to send their children to schools to which they object? And it is most certain that a Christian people must object to schools from which Christianity is excluded. It has been truly said by a writer of no little discernment that the State has a moral character; and that, until the moral character of the State is fully recognised, "sacerdotalism" will never be got rid of. This is most true. The commission and authority of the Church through its pastors will never be got rid of till the State usurps it. But the State can never usurp it in virtue of its moral character, for in usurping it the State will violate its highest moral duty. The moral character of the State consists in this, that it is bound to protect the moral rights and moral duties of all its members. It derives its moral character from its members. It has no moral rights nor moral duties independent of them, still less against them. Every father and mother has by the natural and Divine law the moral right and the moral duty to educate their children, and to determine the nature of that education. Every Christian father and mother has the right and the duty to see that their children shall receive a Christian education. The State has no right to compel them to send their children to schools where any religion but their own is taught, nor to schools from which Christianity is excluded. In this the parents stand upon rights and duties of the moral and Divine law, in the presence of which the State is powerless. Water cannot rise above its source. The State has no rights, therefore no duties, higher than those of the parents. Sacerdotalism claims no such rights against the natural rights of parents. The Church claims and possesses the right and the commission to direct, and by all moral power to constrain, its members to educate their children as

Christians ; and, further, to protect them in these rights and duties against all adversaries : and of all adversaries, from Julian to Voltaire, the State, when it exceeds its rights, is the worst. A Christian civil power educating by its public action an united people in sound Christian schools, is the most perfect example of the moral character of the State. A civil power holding the balance of justice even in a firm neutrality among the religious sections of a divided people, assisting them to educate their children, partly by private and partly by public means, in schools proper to their respective religious convictions, is the less perfect, but the inevitable, condition of a State which has forfeited its religious unity. A civil power rejecting all religion from its public action, and excluding it from its popular education, and nevertheless meddling with teachers, schools, and books, becomes the worst of social tyrannies, the tyranny of bureaux and of pedants. In such a system the State has not only got rid of sacerdotalism, but has usurped the parental rights of the people. Its usurpation upon the office of the Church is an usurpation also upon the authority of every father and mother in the land.

We cannot be too prompt in measuring the full extent of the conflict into which we may be entering. It is no less than a trial of strength between the traditions of Christian England and the demands of those who, while they strip the State of all Christianity, claim for it a supreme control over the education of the people. They tell us that the time is come for enlarging our conceptions of the State, by claiming for it a right to exercise those functions which the clergy have hitherto regarded as their own. But those functions are essentially and exclusively religious ; and the clergy claim a direction of education, because education in its essence is the religious formation of children by the law of Christian faith and morals. This claim then of the State is equivalent to a State supremacy over the conscience. What was once claimed for Kings is now claimed for States. But Kings claimed a supremacy to direct their people in matter of religion ; the State is now to claim a supremacy to strip the education of the people of Christianity, and to exclude their pastors and clergy from directing the education of children. Now, this is nothing else than the deification of the civil power, which Christianity overthrew. It is the

lex regia of Ancient Rome in which emperors were pontiffs, a true tyranny over body and soul : for to exclude religion from education is not less an exercise of supremacy in matter of religion than to determine how far it shall be taught. The power which exercises its discretion to exclude religion altogether, claims thereby a power to admit it if it will ; and if to admit it, then in what form and to what degree. That is, the State thereby constitutes itself supreme over the religion of the people. It will continue to permit adults to practise what religion they will in the public Churches : but it will not permit the children to practise or to learn religion in the public schools. So far as the action of the State goes, the adults of the next generation may abandon religion altogether. The Churches may be empty ; for men educated without religion will assuredly not frequent them.

Thus far we have spoken only of the extinction of religion by privation. There is another side to this picture, which we have touched upon but cannot now fill up : the extinction of morality. In the history of the Christian world no record is to be found of immorality so profound as that which springs from education without Christianity. If Christianity has in any degree purified the world, the expulsion of Christianity from the formation of a people must by an inevitable law plunge them once more into the degradation of the old world. What S. Paul has luminously described, certain populations who have grown up without religion visibly shew at this day. Let us then openly warn our countrymen that the only security for the preservation of our Christianity, of our public morality, and of the liberty of conscience, is the independent action of the Church interposing itself between the State and the people. A State armed with supreme power in religion is the most formidable adversary of truth and of conscience upon earth. The spiritual authority of the Church is the guardian of our religious liberty ; and our religious liberty consists in the free exercise of religion in adults, and in the religious education of their children. It is therefore most true that sacerdotalism, and the independent guardianship of Christian pastors, is the true antagonist of State despotism in religion and education. What is called Denominational Education, is no more than Christian education protected and guarded by the ministers of

religion, to whom the fathers and mothers of the people willingly confide the care of their children.

It will, we know, be answered, that to institute a system of national secular instruction leaving to parents the full freedom to provide whatsoever religious instruction they think fit, is no usurpation of the rights of parents. But this is to play with words. Such a system deprives their children of religious education altogether. The secular school at best can only instruct them ; the religion taught out of school does not educate them. As we have said, the intellect, the heart, the will, the character, are to be formed by the united, constant, and uniform action of Christian teaching and Christian training ; which things are alike impossible except in Christian schools. And such schools Christian parents have a right to demand of a Christian State ; and a State that refuses their demand thereby abdicates its Christianity. It is not to be believed that any statesman could be found in England to propose a secular system of education as a thing desirable in itself, but only as the dire and inevitable alternative forced upon us by what is called " the religious difficulty." We are supposed to be so hopelessly divided in religion, that religious education is no longer possible. United religious education is indeed impossible ; but separate religious education is not impossible. And religious education is of greater price than united education. An united system of schools may be expedient, but a religious teaching and training is vital. If the former can be given up, the latter cannot.

There does not exist in England more than a handful who would prefer schools without religion to Christian schools. The people of England are Christian, and the education of England is still Christian. For the first time it is seriously threatened. The tradition of Christian education descends to us as a part of our Christian civilization. Christianity and civilization came together and sprung from the same source. It is Christianity which has created our domestic, and civil, and political order. Rudely as the religious unity of England was shattered three hundred years ago, Christian education survived and has been handed down, more or less, in its integrity until now. The first breach in it is being made in the old Universities ; and what is attempted in the

highest schools of the land will be attempted in the lowest. But there is no parity in the cases. If old endowments be national property, the voluntary contributions which support our poor schools are not national property. The public revenues which assist these voluntary efforts are national, and may be justly extended in aid to all ; but it would be a ruinous policy and an evil day in which the state, by excluding religion from state-assisted schools, should paralyze the voluntary efforts of those who now bear two-thirds of the burden of our popular education, and dry up the perennial sources of their generous charity. By a most unwise parsimony, we grant year by year some £600,000 for education. This sum elicits and sets in motion £1,200,000, that is, double the amount, by voluntary contribution ; and this sum of £1,200,000 represents what money cannot produce, or purchase, or supply : the energy, zeal, intelligence, activity, and personal service of a vast number of the most intelligent and benevolent men and women throughout the country, who, counting Christianity dear above all things, and their denomination of Christianity pure and true above all others, are willing to labour and to deny themselves with exemplary zeal and perseverance, in order to extend to others the gift they count to be their own chief good. To secularize, then, our popular education, would be not only to forfeit this vast annual income of voluntary offerings, but to destroy what is still more valuable, the moral forces which move the hands to generosity, because they move the heart to Christian zeal. Touch this, and it withers like a sensitive plant. The people of England, in all their religious divisions, are still resolved to hold fast, and to hand on, their inheritance of Christian education. The Catholic Church acknowledges no other. It has had full experience of State education in many lands, for its universality brings it into contact with all nations. It has a manifold experience ; and experience makes men wise. The Church has had full experience of the University of France and of the Common School System of America, and can give its evidence when it is needed. But the need hardly exists ; the evidence of French and American writers, and in America of Protestants and Protestant ministers, renders our testimony unnecessary. The immorality, public and private, domestic and personal, which has sprung from

education without religion, is now forcing itself upon the conscience of the United States. And yet it is at such a moment that we are invited to adopt it as the solution of the "religious difficulty." Any religious difficulties are of little moment compared with immorality, which saps the foundations of home and of society.

Let us turn for a moment to our actual state and progress in education. It is estimated that, in the population of England and Wales, the number of children who ought to be under education is 3,500,000; and that in all schools, whether assisted by Government grants or not, there are at this time not more than 2,165,000 on the books. There remain, therefore, 1,335,000 to be provided for. Now it may be said that this vast system of education has been formed since the year 1839. It is strictly denominational. If in thirty years the Denominational System has done so much, what in twenty or even ten more, with the experience, and moral forces and means which are perpetually accumulating, may it not accomplish? and that all the more surely and promptly if, by a prudence wiser than its parsimony, the State shall double its education grant, and thereby elicit, if not a double, at least an equal amount of voluntary contributions. If £1,800,000 a-year now provides for two-thirds of our children, another million would cover the waste places of our country with schools. There is no part of our country so waste in which a secular school would be preferred by the people to a Christian school. Between a denominational school and a secular school there are gradations of religious teaching which would reconcile nearly all our divisions and yet preserve the Christian character of the school. The system which is misnamed national in Ireland, where an education without a religion is imposed upon a people of which five-sixths are perfectly united in their faith, might, if applicable anywhere, be applied to such a residuum of our population as refuse by reason of their religious divisions a better and more perfect system. But what wisdom or justice is there in robbing those who desire, and will deny themselves to maintain, a Christian system of denominational schools, because in a few residual cases such schools would not content a small number of sectaries?

But we gladly leave contending with those who are divided,

and address ourselves to you who are of one heart and mind in this vital matter of education. It is our duty to-day to move you to give your contributions to the Catholic Poor School Committee.

You are well aware what claims the Committee has upon your generosity. Since the year 1847 it has been the accredited channel of correspondence between the Catholics of this country and the Government. In the year 1847 it entered into compact with the Committee of Privy Council upon certain definite conditions. That compact is in force to this day. It is the charter of our education. Under this system the growth of the number of our schools is very great. The Poor School Committee gave the first impulse to the movement of Catholic education, and the movement begun by it has been taken up and multiplied in the thirteen dioceses of England.

In the last year the Poor School Committee has sustained a loss which has been felt throughout England, in the death of its venerable chief. Charles Langdale may be regarded almost as its founder. His name will be indelibly recorded in the history of our poor children. Under God the work he begun, and urged onward with such generous and unrelaxing perseverance, will not be slackened. His office has descended upon one who has given his whole heart to its promotion; and we appeal to you to-day in the confidence that you will do your utmost to assist in preserving inviolable, and in extending throughout the Catholic population of England, the inestimable gift of a Christian and Catholic education.

May every best and perfect gift from the Father of Light descend upon you and upon your children.

Third Sunday after Pentecost, 1869.